Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
Proper 19 (B)
New Testament: Mark 8:27-38

BACKGROUND
During this "Ordinary Time" our lives may well include exceptionally un-ordinary events, such as births and deaths. As we take this journey, nourished by the scriptures appointed for the season and empowered by our baptisms, we are invited to be on the lookout for all the blessings found in the ordinary – to see God at work here and now. And we are compelled to share our blessings with others.

The Pharisee in each of us wants to "get it right." In the gospel passages for Propers 17-22 from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is concerned that we "get it." So Jesus takes the ordinary things of life, from washing hands to attending to a child, and meets us where we are and helps us to "get it," finding blessings in the ordinary.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
"Who do people say that I am?" Jesus asks his disciples. And they offer the various responses they have heard. "But who do YOU say that I am?" asks Jesus. Ah, the central question. Central for the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. Central for us. Who do WE say that Jesus is?

THEME
If You Want to Become My Followers

BEFORE CLASS
You will need Bibles for the children, and art supplies you will need if you are going to do the craft activity.

BEGINNING
Pass out copies of the Bible and the bookmarks. Help them find and mark 2 Kings 2:1-13. Ask them which section of the Bible holds that book (Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament). If you have time, read the passage. If time is short, tell them the story. You might tell the children: Elijah was a prophet, a man who told it like it is. It was time for Elijah to be taken up to heaven and his apprentice, Elisha, would now do the work Elijah had been doing. Elisha had been a good apprentice and wanted to do a good job. He knew that the key to doing a good job was having the spirit that had been helping Elijah. He asks for the same spirit to fall on him. Elijah tells him to watch very carefully as he is taken up to heaven, not take his eyes off of him, and he will get what he needs. As Elijah is being taken up, Elisha keeps his eyes peeled on Elijah, and when Elijah is gone, his coat is at the feet of Elisha, who picks it up and goes on to do the work he

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has been given to do. To this day, many Hebrew people still expect Elijah to come back, and at the feast of Passover they set a place for him in case he shows up.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you for the Prophet Elijah and for those who still wait for his return. Thank you for sending Jesus who will come again. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 8:27-38

Ask the children to find this passage in their Bibles. Ask them, "Which section of the Bible contains this book?" (Tell them it's in the New Testament, in the gospels.) Ask for volunteers to read. You might break the passage in this fashion: verses 27-30; verse 31; verses 32-33; verse 34; verses 35-37; verse 38.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who is John the Baptist? (The children may remember that it was John the Baptist who baptized Jesus and was later killed by King Herod.)
- Who is Elijah? (He was a prophet that the Hebrew people expect to return again.)
- What did the disciples mean by saying that Jesus is the Messiah? (The Hebrew people believed that the Messiah – a descendant of King David – would come and be a glorious King.)
- Why didn't Jesus want the disciples to tell other people what they were noticing? (Jesus knew that he was not going to be the kind of king they expected.)
- What does Jesus say is going to happen to him? (He predicts rejection, death and resurrection.)
- What is going on between Peter and Jesus in verses 32b and 33? (Peter wants to protect Jesus from the future that Jesus predicts, and Jesus tells Peter he is getting in the way.)

ACTIVITY

Invite the children to explore the meaning of "taking up your cross and following Jesus" by developing their own "crosses." Explain that knights of old went out to do battle carrying a shield with their family crest and motto. We probably won't need suits of armor, but our own crosses help us notice who we are.

Tell the children that we will be working on this for the next several weeks, so they can be thinking about things they want on their crosses as well as a motto that describes them. They can incorporate their family name if they want, or just use their first name. They can be thinking of symbols to describe things they have a talent for doing, such as a musical note, a sports ball, a paint brush, etc. Perhaps one of their talents is entertaining a much younger sibling or young friend in the neighborhood. Maybe they spend time with an elderly grandparent. Perhaps they serve as acolytes in your church. Draw these "talents" out of the children and help them discover ways to include them on their cross.

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Give them some paper and pencil and time to start thinking about what they may want to include.

GETTING CLOSURE

Invite the children to think about what it means to each of them to be a Christian. What are the hard parts? What are the comforting parts? Here are some additional questions, if time permits:

Can you think of times when following Jesus will:

- make you seem odd to friends at school?
- cause you to have to make difficult choices?
- invite you to be who you really are, using your gifts and talents?
- help you discover what is really true, valuable, and beautiful?
- will maybe even change your priorities?

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for showing us the ways to follow you. Thank you for loving us as we learn how to do what you call us to do. Amen.

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